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SPAIN FUNDS ITC WORK IN PREPARING LDCs FOR WTO MEMBERSHIP

Spain is donating €150,000 to the International Trade Centre's (ITC) work with Least Developed Countries (LDCs), to prepare them to seize the opportunities that can come with membership to the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The one-year pact, signed by Spain's Secretary of State for Commerce Silvia Iranzo and ITC Executive Director Patricia R. Francis, will help finance ITC's role in a special joint programme with the WTO that focuses primarily on the private sector.

The WTO-ITC Programme on Trade Capacity for Acceding LDCs, which is officially being launched today at the WTO Ministerial Meeting in Geneva, initially involves five aspiring WTO members - Ethiopia, the Lao PDR, Liberia, Yemen and Samoa.

"We are delighted at our ever closer cooperation with Spain when it comes to assisting LDCs," said Ms Francis. "This programme will help create export-orientated business environments that countries require to take advantage of opportunities, as well as face the challenges, of WTO membership."

ITC will organize seminars, workshops and capacity building programmes as well as provide business guides and market research, among other initiatives, which aim to ensure that the private sector benefits from joining the 153-member WTO.

ITC will also cooperate with chambers of commerce, and other trade support institutions, in the five countries to stimulate internal debate and advocacy campaigns about the benefits of WTO membership and trade integration.

Last year, Spain signed a €250,000 accord with ITC to help develop the export potential of small and medium sized businesses in Latin America and the Caribbean. "Spain is committed to helping poorer countries strengthen their economies through trade," said Ms Iranzo. "Working with the ITC is an excellent way of achieving this," she added.

ITC is a joint agency of the United Nations and the WTO, focusing in particular on developing the export capabilities of small and medium-sized businesses in developing and transition countries.

For more information on ITC activities at the WTO Ministerial, visit <http://www.intracen.org/aidfortrade/>

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